

LESSON 2

FUNDAMENTALS OF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

War, once declared, must be waged offensively, aggressively. The enemy must not be fended off, but smitten down. You may then spare him every exaction, relinquish every gain; but till down he must be struck incessantly and remorselessly.

*--Mahan: The Interest of
America in Sea Power, 1896*

In striving to achieve strategic objectives most quickly and at least cost, Joint Force Commanders will normally seek the earliest opportunity to conduct decisive offensive operations.

*--Joint Pub 3-0, Doctrine for
Joint Operations, 1995*

Introduction

Purpose	This lesson examines offensive operations from the Marine Air-Ground Task Force's (MAGTF) perspective.
Why Study Offensive Operations?	The ultimate objective in war is to defeat the enemy by applying superior military power at decisive places and times. The ability to plan for and execute successful offensive operations is essential for the MAGTF officer. The importance of this study is to help you understand the purposes and fundamentals of offensive operations and to reinforce the idea that synchronization of all assets within the MAGTF is required for success.
Relationship to Other Instruction	This lesson reinforces previous MAGTF instruction and serves as a review of the basic concepts and principles of war addressed in previous courses of the 8800 Program. A recurring theme in MEF operations is offensive action as a facet of joint and multinational operations. You will revisit this theme throughout the remainder of the 8800 Program.
Study Time	This lesson, including the issues for consideration, will require approximately 4 hours of study.

Educational Objectives

Purposes for Conducting Offensive Operations	Examine the purposes for conducting offensive operations from both the Joint and MAGTF perspective. [JPME 2(a), 2(d), and 3(b)]
Fundamentals	Explain the fundamentals of offensive operations.
Forms of Offensive Maneuver	Comprehend the forms of offensive maneuver available to the commander.
Distribution of Forces	Comprehend the importance of distribution of forces as a primary means for the commander to influence offensive operations. [JPME 1(a) and 2(a)]
JPME Areas/ Objectives/Hours (accounting data)	1/a/0.5 2/a/0.5 2/d/0.5 3/b/1.0

Discussion

Fire and Maneuver

The application of superior military power is the essence of *offensive operations*. Offensive operations are characterized by the integration of fire and maneuver. Each offensive maneuver is controlled to create a preponderance of force on a decisive point.

Maintain the Initiative

WA commander must go on the offensive to impose his will on the enemy, determine the course of the battle, exploit enemy vulnerabilities, and seize and maintain the initiative.

WA commander who maintains the initiative through offensive action compels his enemy to react to his actions and denies his enemy freedom of action.

Offensive Fundamentals Necessary

The offensive is central to the Marine Corps' warfighting philosophy of maneuver warfare.

WOffensive operations may take on many forms--from an amphibious assault conducted by a joint force maritime commander, to a penetration conducted by a joint force aviation component commander.

WTechnology and specific techniques may alter with time, but regardless of the specific type of offensive operation being planned and conducted, certain fundamentals and imperatives have proven historically necessary to ensure success.

Required Readings

Joint Pub Readings

Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations (1995)*, Chapter IV. Find this reading in the *Joint Pub Readings Volume I (8800)*, pp. 363 to 381. This chapter discusses Joint Operations in War and includes information relating to the following:

- wConsiderations before, and at the outset of, combat
 - wSustained combat operations
 - wJoint Operations in the littoral or maritime environment
 - wOperation when weapons of mass destruction are employed
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FMFM Readings

FMFM 6, *Ground Combat Operations*, Chapter 1, pp. 1-13 to 1-19 and Chapter 5. Find this reading in the *FMFM Readings (8800)*, pp. 341 to 347 and pp. 375 to 399. These chapters provide background on the fundamentals of ground combat operations and offensive operations.

FM/FMFRP Readings

MCWP 0-1, *Marine Corps Operations (Draft of 11 August 1997)*, chapter 8. Find this reading in the *FM/FMFRP Readings (8800)*; pp. 235 to 242. The draft presents doctrine relating to the imperatives, offensive operation framework, forms of maneuver, and types of Marine Corps operations.

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Required Reading, Continued

***MAGTF
Operations
Readings***

wHolder, L.D., MG, USA. "Offensive Tactical Operations." *Military Review*, December 1993, pp. 48 through 56. Find this reading in the *MAGTF Operations Readings*, Annex A, pp. A-3 through A-11. MG Holder discusses offensive tactical operations in a power-projection Army, summarizes the key ideas of the revised manual, and offers some thoughts about what remains to be done in training and in doctrine to implement the principles of FM 100-5.

wKagan, Frederick. "Army Doctrine and Modern War: Notes Toward a New Edition of FM 100-5." *Parameters*, Spring 1997, pp. 134 through 151. Find this reading in the *MAGTF Operations Readings*, Annex A, pp. A-13 through A-30. This article discusses the need to use the AirLand Battle doctrine as a basis for understanding the future of warfare. It pairs the similarities and differences in Soviet Operational Art to the AirLand Battle doctrine. Finally, it attempts to identify shortcomings in FM 100-5/1993. Use this article as a way to look critically at Marine Corps doctrine on offensive operations. Consider how Kagan might critique the Corps' doctrine.

For Further Study

Supplemental Readings

The following readings are **not** required. They are provided as recommended sources of additional information about topics in this lesson that may interest you. They will increase your knowledge and augment your understanding of this lesson.

wJoint Pub 1, *Joint Warfare of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 10 Jan 95.

wFM 100-5, *Operations (Draft 4 April 1997)*, Part 4, Chapter 1.

wFM 100-15, *Corps Operations*.

Issues for Consideration

Purposes for Conducting Offensive Operations

What are the purposes for conducting offensive operations? What considerations must be examined before and during combat?

Fundamentals

What are the fundamentals of offensive operations? The Army and the Marine Corps each have doctrine concerning the conduct of offensive operations. What, if any, fundamental philosophical differences exist between the two?

Forms of Offensive Maneuver and Distribution of Forces

What are the forms of offensive maneuver available to the commander? What considerations influence the commander in organizing and distributing his forces to conduct offensive maneuver warfare?
